Introduction:

Influencing public policy is an ambitious undertaking. To influence or implement policy, Community Psychologists (CPs) need methods or strategies that work for you.

As you develop your plan, one key opportunity is to influence policy directly through rules, regulation or legislation. This route, while challenging, should be of keen interest to CPs who often pursue second order or system level change* to implement a permanent improvement in the status-quo.

Background

* MA Community Psychology 1994
* Part time independent researcher  ARNOVA; ISTR & SCRA
* Volunteer experience:

  Chair Legislative Committee from 1999-2011 and Board member of a
disability nonprofit representing 1400 families of families with disabled
member; testified twice before NY State Legislature as disability advocate.

* Work experience:

  Testified ~ 30 times as staff member of NY State Agency- consumer
advocacy and public policy regulation of utilities. Also, MA level
practitioner Employee Assistance Program Coordinator (part time) for
Agency of ~500 employees administering its workplace wellness program for
20 years.
**Purpose:**

The purpose here is to promote policy influence through rules, regulations or legislation to advance core or hallmark values of the field of Community Psychology. This effort may be applied at national, state, local or organizational levels of community.

This approach is designed to assess existing policies or legislation, enabling CPs to formulate, draft or promote legislation that is strongly aligned with, or advances, core Community Psychology values.

Applying this approach, legislation and policies were examined at state, county, village and organizational levels from the states of New York and Wisconsin.
Community Challenges & Issues Addressed:

All communities face serious challenges.

The following issues were selected due to their severity, prevalence or urgency of need to prevent or remediate serious consequences on communities:

* toxic chemical exposure of children
* gun violence
* exploitation of low wage workers
* cyber bullying of children
* race based harassment in schools: offensive names/mascots “Redskins”
Community Challenges & Issues Addressed:

Why were these issues selected?

These challenges apply widely, across most communities.

Also, many CPs would likely be concerned with such issues and may seek opportunities to influence policy in their own communities to help prevent or remediate such serious and challenging problems.

One of the opportunities presented by studying policies and legislation in other jurisdictions is that such analysis can lead to applying or improving practices adopted in other states or regions. Problems well solved in one community can be applied to others.
What is “Model Legislation” to a Community Psychologist?

“Model” legislation means different things to different people. Members of the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) develop “model” legislation for use in various states*. While “non-partisan”, its core values include: limited government, free markets and federalism. This creates a conservative bias in what it views as “model”.

“Model” legislation or policies understandably reflect core values.

“Model” policies or legislation, from a CP perspective, necessarily would reflect core values of the field, the approach proposed here.

* other organizations include: National Association for Attorneys General; American Bar Association; National Consumer Law Center; National Conference of Commissioners on Uniform State Laws etc.
What values are reflective of the field of Community Psychology?

Various values commonly held as basic to the field include*:

* primary prevention
* early intervention
* second order change
* system level change
* social justice
* empowerment
* citizen participation
* diversity
* respect for all cultures &
  community members
* empirical grounding

* such as described by: Heller et al (1984); Duffy & Wong (1996); Dalton, Elias & Wandersman (2001) etc.
What is the view of Model” Legislation or policies used here?

For the purpose of identifying “model” legislation or policy, these values are considered core or hallmark values of the field and properly considered in assessing or developing “model” policies*.

* primary prevention
* second order change
* social justice
* citizen participation
* respect for all cultures & community members

* early intervention
* system level change
* empowerment
* diversity
* empirical grounding

* CPs are free to apply additional or different values or standards than proposed and applied here.
### Summary of “Model” Cases Examined:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Rule Type</th>
<th>State</th>
<th>Jurisdiction</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>toxic exposure of children</td>
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<td>Albany County</td>
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<td>policy resolution</td>
<td>New York</td>
<td>School District</td>
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Value Assessment: Does it qualify as “Model”?

<table>
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<th>Second Order Change</th>
<th>Social Justice</th>
<th>Empowerment</th>
<th>Citizen Participation</th>
<th>Diversity</th>
<th>Respect for All Cultures</th>
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<tr>
<td>Legislative Bill</td>
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- Second Order Change
- Social Justice
- Empowerment
- Citizen Participation
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- Respect for All Cultures
- Empirical Grounding

Model Legislation?
### Value Assessment: Does it qualify as “Model”?

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**Model Legislation?**

YES

NO

YES
Conclusion:

Influencing policy is a powerful way to advance the values of Community Psychology. Just as others use “model” legislation or policies to advance their prerogatives, CPs may do the same.

Assessing existing legislation using core values of CP will help illuminate whether proposed legislation advances public interests and may reveal changes to substantially improve its impact on communities. This can lead to modifications or -- the creation of new legislation.

“Model” legislation is highly usable by both practitioners and academics, and is in a language readily understood by policymakers at national, state and local levels for CPs who seek public policy influence to advance the public good.

Can this approach to policy influence be helpful to you? If so, how?
Christopher Corbett

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MA Community Psychology (1994)

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